



Gay Fathers of Sacramento

PRESIDENT'S CORNER

By John Merical

Well, have ya had enough rain? I hope every one is doing fine and the weather has not caused you any problems. So far I've been able to "knock on wood", hope you have been too.

I hope that our new members, Mike C. and Stephen M., enjoyed themselves at their first meeting, at our *new meeting site*. For those who missed the announcement we no longer meet at the Lambda Center. **Our new meeting site is at 1320 21st Street, Suite 100.** There is plenty of parking (parking lot), on the north side of the building. We still have the same meeting time, 6:00 pm, with potluck social starting around 6:30 pm.. Come join us and make new friends and see old ones.

Flower Sales

We are considering rescheduling our yearly flower sale for the weekend before (March 13th & 14th) St. Patrick's Day. We would be selling green carantions in front of Faces, 20th & K

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Street. We are also trying to come up with other ideas for fund raisers for GFS. If you have any suggestions, please call me or Mark, or leave your idea on the GFS message line, (916) 456-DADS (3237).

MONTHLY SOCIAL MEETING

The monthly social will be at John Merical's on March 22, 1998, at 6:30 pm.

Directions

Highway 99 south until you reach the Consumes River College exit. R/T at the light w/b to Bruceville Road, L/T, at Traffic light. S/B on Bruceville to Calvin Rd (the 3 way stop intersection) now make a R/T, W/B to traffic light (Center Parkway) and make a L/T S/B on Center Parkway to 4 way stop sign, Jacinto Rd. R/T on Jacinto Rd to Parkside apartments My address is 6271 Jacinto Rd., Apt 127. It's all the way in the rear of the complex. Parking may have to done on the surface street if u are not comfortable parking along the curb (red) in the rear. Any questions, members can call me.

John

The Pain's Still There

I settled my claim against the City of Sacramento a few days ago. It was, I thought the final chapter of my law enforcement career as a closeted police officer. As a matter of fact, I saw this as an opportunity to concentrate more on my personal issues. Then, a few days later, I picked up the Sacramento Bee and on the front page of the Metro News, I read, "Many Gay Cops Confront Macho Work Culture." The article talked about how police officers are still closeted and the discrimination and harassment continue in the "macho work of law enforcement." "While attitudes are changing," most gay officers stay locked in the closet out of fear for homophobic prejudices and harassment by many, many colleagues and lack of support from those who fear they will be labeled homo sympathizers or worst, a homo themselves.

The article went onto state that it was difficult to measure the degree of confortability of gay officers within agencies in the greater Sacramento Area. Then I read the joke of the month, "Officials said sexual orientation is a private matter and that how well an officer does the job is all that matters." Yea, in a perfect world.

Jayne Rountree Commemorative Library
Lambda Community Center
Sacramento, CA

If that were true I would have been out as a gay police officer long before I decided, the hell with it, I'm coming out. I was a police lieutenant getting promoted to captain, a position I felt most safe in. As a Manager, I was now in a position to set policy and procedures. To insure the opportunity to create a positive, supportive working environment for all employees, including those who were gay. As long as these individuals were not expected to make individuals accountable for their conduct, minorities, women, and gay employees would continue to be harassed, discriminated against, and for gays, locked in the closet.

I was not the least bit surprised at the civil suit filed earlier this month by female officers within the Sacramento Police Department who stated the lack of accountability had been going on for over 20 years. NO DUH!

Don't believe for one minute that it is a safe working environment for an officer to come out, at least in the greater Sacramento area. There is a reason why the greater Sacramento area does not have openly gay police officers, or very few that are out. First of all, if an officer is out and openly gay, the news services would have a hey day. Your family will be put in the picture (no pun intended). Everyone, even those you did not want to know, will know and you will more than likely, be outed by someone rather than coming out the way you choose to.

Case in point. I have been out almost 3 years. Yes, I haven't gone public with it, why should I, no one else has to. I have attended public gatherings, manned the Lambda Fair Booth for GFS, been out in public with gay

friends, running into fellow police officers, and even have conversation with some while I wear my rainbow t-shirt, and necklace with no fear or worry about being outed.

Then last year, I went with a gay friend down to the Sacramento County Sheriff's Department for him to set a court date for his failing to appear on a written promise to appear. Although I knew he was going to be arrested and booked, he thought all he would be doing was setting a court date and going home. When he was told he would be booked he asked that I be given all his property instead of having it booked with him during his stay..

Upon entering an area where information was being taken from my friend, I ran into two deputies, one I had been in the police academy with, and another deputy I knew. A picture is worth a thousand words and if I could show you the look on their faces when I stepped through the door. You would think to yourself, if they didn't know before, they sure as hell know now.

After I had left the deputies asked my friend how long we had known each other, and why I was with him. They never once asked if I were gay, or if our relationship was strictly a friendship.

To make a long story short, I met with a police friend of mine that Friday and he told me he was told the guy I was with was my boyfriend; I was gay.

I know the only reason my career was as successful as it was because I remained in the closet almost all of my

police career. The attitudes were the same when I first went to work at the Police Department, the entire time I was there, and the last day I worked. As the article points out, it's there today. Yes it has gotten better, but not to the extent any male officer would come out.

I thought the pain of not being able to be openly gay and to do my job just as good as I did in the closet, would subside as time passed. Then I picked up the newspaper and realized, the pain's still there

"...And Then I Became Gay"

By Mark Wininger

Can you recall when you realized that you were gay? Ritch C. Savin-Williams presents an analysis of the stories of gay youth between 19 and 25 in his book, "...And Then I Became Gay." As I read the chapters with titles such as Childhood Memories, Feelings & Attractions & Disclosures to Others I recognized my own development as a closeted gay youth and adult. Reading books such as this and sharing my experiences with others has allowed myself to see that I am not alone, that my feelings and experiences are normal, normal for a gay youth.

Our experiences, our "turning points," are the events that direct the paths we take in life and become the stories of our lives. By sharing these stories we are no longer ashamed of them, we free ourselves to love our gayness. As a youth I felt out of place. I was fearful of rejection as I struggled with my attractions for other boys and men. I wasn't able to "put it all together" until I came out as gay. As I began the process of letting go of the nega

tive stereotypes, those that I feared were true, I began to learn the truth. I was learning to let go of the old and grasp the new. I was growing; I was setting myself free.

In Armisted Maupin's book, "Tales of the City" he wrote, "I am so tired of these stories of 'Oh the torture and torment of coming out.' The torment is in being in." We have struggled for so long with our negative judgements of other gays and ourselves. But are our actions and feelings really negative? Struggling, painfully hiding in fear, we find it hard to believe that being what we fear the most, being gay, can actually be freeing and joyful. When I first came out to the group I remember Jerry Woodward's wonderful smile as he told me that being out of the closet was a wonderful freeing experience. It was hard to believe him, but now nearly two years later it is wonderful, and now I smile when I tell others it's wonderful.

What do you fear most about your gayness? What are you holding onto, what are you fearful of?

We are so lucky to have a support group; to have friends to help us as gay fathers, to help us set ourselves free.

Are we afraid to let people see us as we really are?

To grow we need to trust, to share, and to be vulnerable.

Growth requires courage because risk is inescapable. Growth is always ongoing; whither you are just

coming out or have been out for twenty years. I encourage each of you to continue to challenge yourselves, to grow, to share with others your needs and experiences, to attend our meetings and socials. It is our friendships that give us courage and hope.

MY SISTER

By Glenn Holsonbake

I want to apologize to the group for the lateness of this newsletter. Hopefully, most of you will get it by Friday or Saturday in time for the meeting.

I was in great shape Tuesday night when Abe and I got home late from dinner. On the message machine were 3 messages, which I almost didn't listen to as it was late and I was tired. But for some reason I pushed the button.

All 3 calls were from my Dad who was more distressed with each message and wanted me to call no matter what time it was. Thinking it was my Grandparents or my Mother who had had trouble, I was shocked to learn my Sister, Sandy, was in surgery having a bypass. Sandy is 4 years my junior, my baby sister. No history of problems, doesn't smoke, drink, is fit and has a cholesterol count so low we would all think it wasn't possible to be that low.

I was on a flight early Wednesday morning to L.A. Her main artery to the front of her heart had ruptured, causing the heart attack. There are so many things which

have happened in the span of 5 days from Tuesday night until Sunday which I am only now beginning to sort out.

Sandy has pulled through the bypass and is now at home in the slow process of recovering her strength. I love her so much and pray she doesn't have a permanent cardiac disability. Only time will tell.

There are so many feelings one goes through and she will experience a great many more over the next few weeks, months, and maybe years.

At 40 years old, this wasn't supposed to happen to her. No one could figure out why and the answers are still not clear yet. In fact what happened is so rare they are doing a paper on her case.

We are all thankful she is still with us and pray her recovery is full. She has 3 children and I hope she is going to be around to help and watch them grow up.

The only sibling I have, I love you Sandy and hope you'll stay around for awhile, a long while.

Don't forget the meeting on Sunday, March 8. Starts at 6:00 with pot luck at 6:30.

1320 21st Street Suite 100

SEE YOU THERE!! :-)